

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
#374**

**YUELL E. CHANDLER, JR.**

**55<sup>TH</sup> COAST ARTILLERY, FORT KAMEHAMEHA**

**INTERVIEWED ON  
DECEMBER 1, 2001  
BY ART GOMEZ AND JERRY GREENE**

TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

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**USS ARIZONA MEMORIAL  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

(Conversation off-mike)

**Jerry Greene (JG):** The following oral history interview was conducted by Art Gomez and Jerry Greene for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, Tapa Tower, Room 329 on December 1, 2001. The time is 2:22 p.m. The person being interviewed is Yuell Chandler, who was a gun captain of the 55<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery.

**Yuell Chandler (YC):** Gun commander.

JG: Gun commander, 55<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

YC: Let's get this straight before we go [*any further*]. I wasn't at Pearl Harbor. I was at Fort Kamehameha, which is at the end of Pearl Harbor, at the base.

JG: Very good. Very good. Thank you, Yuell. I appreciate your contribution today and Art's going to start with a question for you.

YC: Now, let me ask a question before we get started. If you're saying something that's not facts to me, I'm going to correct you.

JG: Good.

**Art Gomez (AG):** Absolutely fine.

JG: Good, that's fine.

AG: You were there. (Chuckles)

YC: Well, it's not so much that is that I know what's going on with some of these guys and I want to be factual, what my

facts are. My facts, you can go look at the Pentagon, at the history, historical section there and get it out.

JG: Can we get your full name?

YC: Yuell E. Chandler, Jr.

JG: And place of birth?

YC: Richmond, Virginia.

JG: Birth date?

YC: Have I got to give that? April 28, 1918.

JG: What did you consider to be your hometown in 1941?

YC: Honolulu, Hawaii.

JG: What were your parents' names?

YC: My father's name was Yuell E. Chandler, Senior. My mother's name was Nora Witt Chandler. Witt was her last name.

JG: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

YC: I have nine brothers and sisters. One passed away just about three months ago.

JG: And how many of those were brothers?

YC: Hmm, hmm, hmm. Four brothers and the rest were sisters.

JG: Where did you go to high school?

YC: Clarksville, Virginia.

JG: And where did you enlist?

YC: Danville, Virginia.

AG: What were the circumstances, Yuell, that brought you to Hawaii in, I understand it was 1939?

YC: This was 1939. It was like—well, I shouldn't—put me straight, now. I'm going to tell you like 1939, getting a job and making a living was like pulling hen's teeth. Okay? No work, only farm. I was raised on the farm and only farm work is all you had to do and nothing else to do. So I decided that I wanted to be on my own and I got the old man to sign the papers and I went up to Danville and joined up for the navy, I mean the army.

And that's what, and at the time, I wanted to go to China, and they says, no, cannot go to China because you have to have previous service. So they recommended that I get two

years in service and then go to China, transfer and go to China. Well, it didn't work out that way, really, because they closed down before the war started, World War II.

AG: What peaked your interest in China? What was your interest in China?

YC: It was—well, we had an army over there. I wanted to go to China. Hell, that's far away. That's across the country, way out there. Never been to China. No, go to China and see what it's like at the time. You know, seventeen-year old.

AG: Where did you take your basic training?

YC: Fort Kamehameha, Territory of Hawaii. I was stationed after I re-enlisted, they sent us up to Fort New Rochelle, New York and then transferred us out to Brooklyn Army Base, 'til they got enough of 'em together to get a shipload to ship over here. They put us on the USAT *Republic*, sent

us through the Panama Canal. We got liberty on both sides and came up to San Francisco and got thirty days liberty there. We picked up some more G.I.s and came to Hawaii, the post or the station of the jewel of the army. I got Fort Kamehameha, which was the jewel of all the army, the best post in the army at the time. And pulled all my time there.

AG: Did you know that, before you got to Kamehameha?

YC: No, I didn't know that 'til after I got here.

AG: Give me your impression of what made it the jewel of the army.

YC: It's the best. I mean it had the best, it had the green play. Everything was nice. Flowers all over the place. Everybody got along and had no—you did your duty and go on liberty. And then—I don't know if I want to tell you that though.

AG: Sure.

YC: It was just the best of all of 'em. A lot of places you could—and the post was more or less open. You could go off any time you wanted to, as long as you did your duty. It was—you had to get through Hickam Field, but that was no problem.

AG: So for the record, can you tell us where Kamehameha was located, in relationship to...

YC: Kamehameha was located...

AG: ...Pearl?

YC: ...you'd have to—I'll have to do it this way. Fort Kamehameha is located in the back of Hickam Field. It's located at the point where the land mass comes to a point on the channel that goes into Pearl Harbor. The ship channel

that goes into Pearl Harbor goes \_\_\_\_\_ on a pointer. And I forget what the name they called it at the time. But that's where Fort Kamehameha was. We had duty station is—I mean, duty is guarding the channel and 155 millimeter guns was our primary weapon. We had anti-aircraft, three-inch anti-aircraft spider mount and permanent mount, which was secondary, fall back on for the anti-aircraft. We fired both of 'em at times and always destroyed the...shucks. Target! Okay.

We'd get the target within three mounds, my crew. Most of the time we'd hit the target with the first round, so we didn't have to worry about anything else, just keep firing.

Tugboats sometimes they'd cut its rope loose and take off. Anti-aircraft, my gun crew went out and shot, after the second round, shot the target out of the air, that the airplane was towing. And we started up the line. The aircraft cut the target loose and took off because we're getting close.

We had the best crew, the fastest crews in the 155s and the four-inch, millimeters, anti-aircraft mounts at that time in the islands.

AG: Were you trained on all of those or did you train specifically on one or the other?

YC: No, we were trained primarily with 155 millimeters, crew. You had a crew with each man was assigned a duty to do. But we were assigned, that was our primary. Then after you got that done, then you trained on the anti-aircraft, four-inch, where you become proficient on those, and that was the secondary.

Then they also had a rifle, 1903 rifle. You had to be proficient in that. What I mean proficient, if you want to get a little increase in your pay, like three or four dollars a month, you become an expert gunner. That meant you tore down the rifle, named the parts, put it back together, tore

down the 155 [*millimeter gun*], cleaned it, named the parts and put it back together. That's primarily the breach, 'cause that's the only part you could take down. And anti-aircraft, same thing. You learned its name, the parts of the anti-aircraft guns and tear 'em down and put 'em back together. That's the training that we received at that time. And that's what I mean when I said a while ago, when you do your duties, then the rest of the time was yours. You shine your shoes or clean whatever had to be done. Wash your clothes or go to town to the hotels downtown, as you know what they were. (Chuckles)

AG: So...

YC: You know, I spent seven, six years primarily in Hawaii, but I never did go down to those hotels. Honest. Hard to find it cheap.

AG: So when you, say, an increase in pay, what was the average increase in pay for a person of your rank? And what was your rank at that time, Yuell?

YC: Sergeant.

AG: Sergeant.

YC: They give you a—I say a medal, and that's what it was, [*to be*] more specific—they pin [*it*] on your shirt, showing that you were an expert gunner or an expert in whatever theme that you were working in or assigned to do. And you wore that. It indicated, hey, look, don't fool with me, I'm an expert. And you get a little bit increase in pay. Just like every year, you got a little increase in pay for longevity, for being in the service.

AG: What did that translate to in '39 to '41?

YC: Well, that's a length of time, like it is now. You see, what they're doing to the G.I.s now. You give 'em all a six-month, big six percent raise and they got another one. And it's hard. Let me put it this way, when I first came in, we were making twenty-one dollars and fifty cents. Twenty-five cents of that went to your laundry, so you get nineteen dollars and a quarter. The next twenty-five percent went to supporting the old soldiers' home at Washington, D.C. So you end up getting nineteen dollars and a quarter a month. Out of that you had to get your shaving equipment, your haircuts and your beer, if you wanted to drink beer or cigarettes or whatever it was. And you had to buy that yourself. So it didn't leave you much to live on. So I managed to save out of that ten dollars a month so I got enough to do something.

You're increasing from private to PFC [*Private First class*]. I think was something like ten dollars a month. If you make a corporal, you get another ten dollars a month. My sergeant's pay, finally I got up to about sixty-one dollars a

month for sergeant's pay at that time, in '69. Then the Congress came along and gave us a little more and it's hard to say what it was, you know, it's varied, the finances.

AG: So prior to your arrival in Hawaii, Yuell, had you had advanced training in artillery, or is this where you actually trained?

YC: Yes, I had had—it was all military type. You stand how you march and walk and talk and remember the—what the hell they call 'em then? Ten of 'em was orders that you had to follow each day. When you're on guard, the guard, the sergeant of the guard or the officer...

JG: General orders?

YC: General orders. Okay. You learned them. That was one of the first things you did. You learned your general orders.

That was nothing. In fifteen minutes, I had that down. Some of the guys never did learn them.

AG: Tell me a little bit about camp life. What was the food like?

YC: About?

AG: Camp life.

YC: Camp life? Well, with me, I had a good life out there at Kam[*ehameha*], because, as I say, it was a good post. You did your job. If you were assigned a duty to guard prisoners, to cut the lawn, you went out and got that done and brought it back to the guard house and turned your rifle in and ammunition in, and went back to the barracks. Cleaned up and took a shower and went to town, if you had anything left over from that nineteen dollars.

Most all the people out there—when I say all, the military at that time—had civilian clothes. We didn't wear uniforms to town. And we all bought a uniform shirt and pants and shoes for civilian. And you did your job and nobody on the post, nobody bothered. You'd go downtown and funny thing, it took me a while to learn how the MPs knew that you were a G.I. in civilian clothes. They always looked at your haircut. Like you see the Marines today, you'd see them and you can tell that they're Marines. And that's how the MPs kept you in line downtown. You'd go to town and if you wanted to fight, you could find one real quick. You wanted to go down and find a date, you could find them. It didn't take too long. You could find somebody that wanted to go out and eat off a G.I., you know. I met my wife in, I guess, 1940, 1940, '41. And so I was pretty close to the being good boy, you know, staying out of trouble. Got in trouble a couple of times, but. Knocked the hell out of an NCO one day and of course he called my outfit a bunch of—well, whatever he wanted to say and I knocked him on his butt. And they court marshaled

me. Took my sergeant rate away from me. So I went over across the street and my commanding officer, "What did they do to you?"

"They busted me."

He said, "Well, here," gave it back to me.

So I made out all right like that. But again, when I say—some of the posts, the army posts are stricter than—like they are now. You can't get on an army post if you don't have identification and maneuver through those things, barricades you got. In those days, we didn't have all of that, even after the attack on Pearl Harbor, didn't have it. Except getting on base, they stopped that. Good life!

AG: So you did a lot of training between 1939 and 1941?

YC: Yeah.

AG: What—were you ever advised as to what you were preparing for?

YC: To any thought of that attack this country, this country, United States of America, by however they wanted to do it, we were training to stop 'em in their tracks. I worked for two years out there, training to protect the flag and the United States and anybody, and keep anybody from coming on the, coming ashore here. I had the distinction of being the sharpest shooter on Fort Kamehameha of all the 15<sup>th</sup>, the 41<sup>st</sup>, and the 55<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery. I was on the—in fact, I ended up on a firing team and we'd go out and compete against other companies. And my company, or the company and my team that I was on usually ended up—we got beat a couple of times—but usually end up with a higher score than most all the others were. I'd shoot at the bull's eye and I'd hit it every time in the middle. And you had the people down there watching to see where you, with the target, you see.

They'd raise it up and fire again. Then they'd given me the MAGIE drawers. "You missed."

I told 'em, "You better give me the right score because the next time, I'm going to shoot right down there where you are!"

But I hit. I got my bull's eyes. I had a rifle that I couldn't miss, believe it or not, a 1903 army rifle. And other people, people on my team, would take, would say, "Okay, how about checking my rifle?"

And I couldn't do anything with their rifle. I had to re-zero that rifle in 'til I could fire with it, but that's how I—part of my training.

Every year we trained on the 155s. We would fire those. And one other gun I neglected to mention to you was that thirty-seven-millimeter gun. It's about that big. It—what we

used in the 55<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, the thirty-seven-millimeter one, we'd mount it on top rear of the 155-millimeter rifles. They had long barrels, you see. We'd mount it back on the barrel, back end of it. Had a means of doing that. And fired that thirty-seven-millimeter to zero the 155s in. When I say to zero, I'd make sure that the guy that set the azimuth and the distance and the plotting room would plot where he's supposed to shoot. And he would hit there every time. That was what the thirty-seven-millimeter. And we had to know something about that too.

I would—we go along here—some things I want to say, I'll forget by the time I want to say 'em. And if I don't say 'em right then, I drop it on the floor and I can't get it. Okay. So what do you—shoot.

AG: When you—did you feel, did your unit, did the men of your unit that an attack on Pearl Harbor was a distinct possibility?

YC: Let me put it this way. We knew something was up from back in 1940, when they were tracking the Japanese in the Pacific Ocean. The navy was with their PB[ Y]-4s and PB[ Y]-2s. That's what they used in those days. They were tracking 'em. So when we went back to the field in '41, what did bug us out again, but the consensus at that time was who in their right mind would attack Hawaii? So you know, you wonder. Ain't nobody that's got any brains going to attack Hawaii, out there in the middle of the ocean, with all these ships and everything else around here.

AG: Were 155[-millimeter] units in place throughout the island?

YC: Was it what?

AG: Were the 155 units in place throughout the island?

YC: Oh, they had throughout the island. I don't know how many companies they had. They were building up then, you know. They got the 97<sup>th</sup> [*Coast Artillery*] later on. They got the 96<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery. And they got anti-aircraft that they were building up all the time. They were all around the island. They had those sixteen-inch guns at Fort Barrett. Fort Barrett had fourteen, sixteen-inch at Fort Weaver. On the Kaneohe side, they had a sixteen-inch battery over there. And they had a company of army 155s stationed over at Kaneohe. To answer your question, yes, they had 'em all over the island. But again, December 7 they had no ammunition. People can't understand that. The navy was the only one that had ammunition and air force, I mean on site.

AG: Elaborate on that a little bit, Yuell.

YC: Well...

AG: Why was that?

YC: The 155-millimeters, it cost about, I don't know, at that time, almost \$1000 to fire that bugger. And they wanted to maintain the ammunition in a secure place because as I mentioned before, it's powder, projectile. It weighs a hundred pounds. The firing mechanism that you fired, they set it off with, they kept it in storage underground out here at Aliamanu, which had just been inside the mountain up there. And that's why the companies didn't keep the 155-millimeter powder, because you know if gets damp or gets wet, it's no good.

We didn't have storage to put that stuff in, to keep it, like they had underground. That's why the army didn't have ammunition on December 7.

Now the ammunition for the rifles and the fifty calibers and stuff like that, you could keep it in the boxes and keep it in

supply room, and keep it—it was no problem. Three or four-inch ammunition, you could keep that with no problem because it was in a shell. But they kept that also in the Aliamanu [*storage facility*].

Take a break! Oh boy.

(Pause)

AG: Yuell, were your units as concerned as say air force was about sabotage?

YC: No. And I don't think the air force was concerned about it either. Not locally, not—they didn't put it out in—let me rephrase that. The command units, the commanding officers, [*Lieutenant*] General Short and all of those people might have been thinking about sabotage because of the Japanese population. They had no proof of that, but they

proved...the President of the United States, [Lieutenant] General Short and the commander, the navy admiral...

AG: Kimmel.

YC: ...convinced the people at Washington that they should take all these Japanese in and put 'em in camps as they did, like in California and the Mainland. But we down at the peons had no idea about that. And all the command people—I shouldn't say this but it's a fact—if you wasn't a *haole*, you was a gook. And you stayed in your place.

AG: Let me bring you then to that day, December 7, 1941.

YC: Okay.

AG: How did your day start?

YC: You got to say it a little louder.

AG: How did your day start?

YC: My day started in bed sleeping. And I got to tell you why I was in bed at seven o'clock sleeping in the morning, instead of being up. It was seven, Sunday morning, granted it was Sunday morning, but very seldom I slept like that. I didn't go to bed 'til after one o'clock. I had been to a football game down at King Street [*Honolulu*] Stadium, me and my wife—at the time was my girlfriend. We had went to the football game. And I had taken her home and then I got back and went into bed and was in bed when it happened.

We had a guy, one of the fellows that had gotten up and went out was outside for some reason or another and he looked up and he saw these planes with that sun on the wings, and he put two and two together and decided they were Japanese. He went through the barracks and waking up everybody that wasn't awake and telling them, "Get your

clothes on and get your pack and get to the station because the Japanese are attacking."

They told him, "You're crazy. Go back to bed."

But then about that time, they hit Pearl Harbor and the ships started blowing up. And then I sailed out of bed then. Got my pack, put my clothes on, work clothes and was double-timing to get to my people down at the motor pool, because that was, my primary duty was in charge of the motor pool and we had five tractors and one truck.

And I was going down this main street there in Fort Kam[*amehameha*] and a side street that came in from the backside of Fort Kam, or from the Hickam side of Fort Kam. As I was going down the road, double-timing, I heard something behind the bushes, because those bushes grew up there and I couldn't see what it was. I didn't know what it was but about that time, by then, I knew what it was. It was

an airplane coming across the street in front of me, almost on the street. He was sailing. And when I say sailing, his engine wasn't running. And that's all I noticed at that time but he crashed into the side of a shop with four guys standing on the loading dock, watching what was going on at Hickam Field. He crashed into those four guys. At the time he crashed, I didn't know that. But now, I'm looking at this Japanese in this plane and trying to determine whether he's alive. And I don't have no ammunition. And what the hell am I going to do if he's alive? So I thought about my bayonet. I put my bayonet on and snuck up the side of the wing and to see where he was and he was slumped over the controls and he was dead. And I still didn't know whether he was dead or not, but then I looked over the loading dock and there was four, three G.I.s laying there, my G.I.s, our G.I.s from the company across the street.

At about that time, I heard a noise and on the opposite side, Honolulu side of the airplane, one guy came up from

underneath that wing. He had gotten, he had fell off or jumped off or had been knocked off of that loading dock...

END OF TAPE #1

TAPE #2

AG: ...American fellows that just crawled out from under the wing.

YC: Okay, the plane, when it crashed into that loading dock and it killed those three guys, then I looked over and I saw three guys laying there. It got you kind of teed off, but what could I do? I didn't have any ammunition on. I had the bayonet. I didn't want to stick him then because he's dead already, huh? So then about that time I heard some noise on the other side of the plane and I looked around and I saw one guy coming up from underneath of the wing of that plane.

He came out and he went down that road like a deer and went around the barracks. I don't never, 'til this day, don't know what happened to that boy.

*[Note: Describing the crash of PO1c Takeshi Hirano's Type 00 "Zero" fighter that careened into the Ordinance Machine Shop at Fort Kamehameha.]*

At about that time, the first sergeant from the, where this kid was from, came over. So I says, "There's nothing I can do."

So he says, "Okay," so he went and checked 'em all in.

And so I says, "I gotta go."

And my motor pool was just about, oh, 300 yards from there, so I went down to the motor pool and my people were up by then, the drivers and operators. So they slept and stayed there all the time, for security reasons. So they got up and I

checked to see that everything was ready to go and I had one tractor sitting there with the tracks off of it. Cleaning it and painting it, you see. So I told them, "Let's put the tracks back on," so in about an hour we had the tracks back on, everything was ready to go.

So then I said, "Okay, now you guys stay here where the phone is and I'm going to go see if I can find the old man, the commanding officer, and see what he wants to do."

So I found a commanding officer had got to the barracks then. And he says, "Well, where are the other people at?"

I said, "Well, I sent everybody that was here over to Fort Weaver, where their gun position was."

He says, "Okay, we'll go over there."

So we got over there and now he said, "Where's the ammunition at?"

I said, "You don't have any ammunition."

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Well, we turned it all in last week when we closed, came in from Schofield, came in from the field."

He said, "Well, you better get ready to go get it." He says, "Get some more."

So I says, "I only got one truck."

He said, "Well, get it going."

So I got back on the other side of Fort Kam and got the truck and got the drivers, there's four of them, and left one guy to

guard. And went from Fort Kam over to Aliamanu. I keep—and picked up as many 100-pound projectiles as I could get in that truck without flattening the tires. Now, I don't know how many it was. I'll never know. I didn't count 'em. But I put 'em all until they stopped me. We took that powder, I mean those projectiles to Fort Weaver. Now, we're about thirty miles from Fort Weaver and it's darker than—you can't see your hand before your face and we got a load of ammunition. So I put one guy on one front fender and guy on the other front fender and I got up on the seat and told the driver, "Okay, go. There's nobody on the road," you didn't turn your lights on, 'cause just as sure you turned your lights on, somebody going to shoot you.

So because there's firing all around at that time of night, you know. It was right after midnight. So we got back, came back to the, got back to Fort Weaver about daybreak and we unloaded that stuff and now we got to go back and get powder, and also firing mechanism—what the hell you call

it? To fire the powder. Anyway, you're not supposed to haul the fuses and the—that you're supposed to haul 'em all separate.

So now we've got a load of powder and I've got it piled up on that truck as high as I can get it, because it's not as heavy, you know. And I says, "I want a box of fuses."

"Well, we can't give you no fuses."

I said, "I want a box of fuses and also primers."

"You can't haul all that!"

"Well, just give it to me."

So I took that and put it in the seat, in the front seat by the driver and brought that back with me. Of course, I didn't want to make no special trip to get a box of fuses.

So my next trip in the daytime now, I'm making headway. I went back to Aliamanu in the daytime, Monday, and got a load, another load of projectiles and the next load was powder, you know, alternate. And we did that 'til Tuesday afternoon, 'til we had enough ammunition to do anything if anybody came up, came ashore.

AG: And once you had the ammunition, did you man a station or was your duty to be moving ammunition from different...

YC: No, we had all the ammunition. That's all we going to get now, you see. So we had the ammunition in case these Japanese started coming ashore, or boats show up out there. We could, we had ammunition to fire. And that's—and we were ready to fire because we had it right there and all we had to do is put it in the barrel and pull the trigger. And each gun was pointed and oriented onto the one point out there. So as I said a while ago, we had a gun, I had a gun

crew and we could estimate the distance out there before the plotting room, because the plotting room—that's another story.

But anyway, how the plotting room got their information to get the guns onto the target was at Fort DeRussy, on the mountain up there, we had an outpost. They would track the target, okay. Down at Waianae, we had another outpost, they could track the target. And wherever the crosshairs crossed, the commanding officer had a tower behind the guns, he could also see where it was. And then the plotting room would plot the travel of that target. And then the commanding officer would give us the command to fire. And that's how we would destroy a target. And as I said a while ago, waiting for the plotting room sometimes got kind of nervous and I had a gun crew that was better than most of the others. We could judge the distance out there, three, four of us, how far is that, you know. And two rounds, we're on target. We really shoot 'em out of the water. When the

old man says, "Fire," and if he's not just right, then the next round we would know where to put it. And that's we get it on the towing target. That's how that's done.

AG: So this is approximately thirty to forty-eight hours after the attack? You've got the ammunition. What is the morale of the unit like at this point?

YC: Everybody's scared as hell. Scared to death. What you going to do? They didn't think that somebody was going to come in or anything else. The morale of the—it was up, ready to go! Let's go get 'em! That's how they felt about it. We can't have somebody here, in most of my thinking mind anyway, we can't have people coming attacking us like this and shooting up our boats. 'Cause they did one hellish damage out there. We were all ready to go. And we would see these ships coming in and out of the harbor. That day, didn't but one boat get out, but after that, we all knew who they were. They had that channel locked. Although two

small Japanese submarines did get inside the harbor that day. We didn't know anything about that 'til later on.

AG: Did you see the aftermath of the harbor?

YC: Oh yes. Oh yes. If you drove Kamehameha Highway around Pearl Harbor, you could see the aftermath. You could see the ships bottom up in there. You could see ships sinking. You could see 'em burning, because it wasn't all that growth there that's there now. And you could see coffins piled up as big as—it looked like as big as a hotel, piled up there on the bottom of the hill there. But it was—and Ford Island was burning like nobody's business. They tore it all to pieces.

AG: What about rumors of follow-up attack? Paratroopers, other...

YC: Not at—paratroopers was a, wasn't a thing at that time. There was all kinds of rumors on sabotage, if you want to

say it that way. Who was firing over the hill last night? Who was firing on—and they were trying to find out why the guy was shooting. “Oh, I heard something and I shot at it.”

We lost some planes by being shot down by our own people. In one case in particular at Hickam Field, a guy got off with a fighter, he got off the ground, but he got over the top of the channel and somebody shot him down. And he crashed into the shallow water at the edge of the channel. He came out of the water, he says, “Excuse me,” he said, “you goddamn dumb ass G.I.s. The only plane in the world to get in the air and you shoot it down!”

That was a pilot. But others got shot down too. But you’d hear rumors that somebody put poison in the water. So they gotta go check it out. Some guy said some guy was out there in the field looking, see Pearl Harbor. Well, they gotta check it out. This guy is working in the pineapple field, that’s all it was. Laborers working, you see. So they never

found any saboteurs, as I know of. But all kinds of rumors, yes.

AG: I was going to take you back to one incident and that's the downed Japanese plane.

YC: Yeah.

AG: You knew you didn't have ammunition.

YC: Yeah.

AG: How—do you know who hit that plane? Did you ever hear who brought that plane down?

YC: How did I know that that plane...

AG: No, I mean did you ever know or hear who shot that plane down?

YC: No, never did. I never...

(Coughing)

YC: ...that's a good point there. I never did know who shot it down or shot the—they shot the pilot is what they done. And it had to happen over Hickam Field, because that's where he came from. Now when the plane hit the building, it bit it, you know. And the pilot, the grave restoration service, took him out and took him up and buried him at Nuuanu with the G.I. s from the memorial. And after the war, he's the only Japanese that went home. They sent him home. You can, you know who Emery is. You can ask him about that. He can tell you all about it. So that's a fact. They sent him home.

But you know, you're teed off at the time. You're hot, you're mad. You're excited and all of this stuff about the Japs,

okay. Well, to me, military operation, they were doing what they were told to do. Not by their country as so much so as individuals. Old—what was the name of the—Tojo.

AG: Tojo.

YC: He's the guy behind all of it. And I—this is strictly a rumor now. I heard this and it's supposed to come from good sources. A couple of hours before that planes took off from those Japanese carriers, coming into Pearl Harbor, that commanding officer told his pilots, "The United States has just declared war on Japan."

So that gave them another incentive, okay? That's the way I heard it. I don't know if it's a fact or not, but that's the only rumor that I got for you.

AG: Well, I'm just going to ask one last question, Yuell, and maybe there's a follow-up with Jerry and/or Karen. Just sort of summarize your military career after Pearl Harbor.

YC: Okay. After Pearl Harbor, there was four times that I almost got killed. Any four times could've done it. It was Iwo Jima. I was on Iwo Jima. This is towards the end of the whole operation, because in between most of it was training new troops to go out and I was on the Mainland for a while too. But I ended up on Iwo Jima. We had 155s out there, set up, ready to shoot in case submarines showed up, Japanese submarines showed up, picking up their troops.

Well, you could sit there and you knew there was a submarine out there because you could hear 'em closing the damn doors! They wouldn't let us shoot at 'em. So well, to make a long story short, in the company area where we had our tents put up, pup tents. You know what a pup tent is? I had a pup tent by myself. I had two halves and put 'em

together and put 'em down on the edge of the roadway, because it was new, the roadway, the company. And put it down and it rained the time too, so the water washed in. So I built a trench around it and piled up dirt around so the water wouldn't get into my pup tent, because I had a bunk with springs on it. I couldn't sleep on the ground. I mean, sleep on something hard, so I took me a bunk with me and I put it in that, slept on that bunk. Then the old man found out, and I had to get rid of it.

So I cleaned out in the pup tent and put a pile of dirt up and digging the dirt up and I felt something hard, you see. So I opened it up and a damn land mine, about that big around. Oh, how the hell am I going—I'm in the back end of the pup tent and this is out in front now. I've got to get out here where that—so anyway, I got out and I called the demolition guy there. And it wasn't armed, lucky. So he pulled it out and disarmed it and then later on, after this has happened, the commanding officer had a little berm in the area that he

wanted to level out, you see. A small mound, I guess you'd call it. And it had a hole in the bottom, in the side of it, where something had been put in there. So one day I had the bulldozer and he said, "Well, how about leveling this off?"

So I started to leveling it off. And got down to the bottom where it was almost level, and I hit something. I mean, the blade wouldn't go down, you see. So I raised the blade back up and got down to look and see. It was a box about that long, about that wide, about that deep. It had a rope handle on it. So I reached and got the rope handle and pulled it. When I pulled it, click! Too late for me to do anything so I pulled it on out. A box of grenades. Didn't go off.

So I called the demolition guy and he disarmed the grenades. Everybody in the battery got a grenade. I got three. I got 'em at home now, disarmed. The Japanese grenades, when they arm it, they have to arm it before they

would go off. They pull the pin out and hit it on something hard, and arm it and then throw it. Well them Japanese got wise. A lot of them things went off when they'd arm it, would go off right away, you see, and kill 'em. So they were reluctant to arm 'em. So they pulled the pin and throw 'em, you see. What I'm getting to is one pulled the pin and threw a grenade at me one day and it rolled right by me. If it had been armed, it would have probably blew up. That was three times.

We were at Iwo Jima and Mount Suribachi was active, okay. And nowhere could you get a bath, fresh water. So you look out there and there's bubbling and the steam coming out of this water, on the edge of the island. So we go out there and take a look and here's fresh water. So it was all around you. We'd go out there and get fresh water, soap up and fresh water. Of course, you've got to wade back through that salt water to get ashore, but at least you get a good, clean shower.

So one day, I was out there and—what the hell you call that there, when the water drags you out?

AG: Riptide?

YC: Riptide. Riptide caught me and pulled me out and lo and behold I was up iron post about that big. I grabbed onto it and stopped. And then about that time another guy come and I caught and pulled him in. Looked around, here's a third guy coming. I said, "What are you doing out here?" to the third guy. I said, "You can't swim!"

So what the hell are we going to do now? We're out there in the water, you're laying flat, you see. So I yelled at a couple of guys. I said, "Go to motor pool and get the rope and throw it out here to us."

So we got them back in that way. So me, dumb ass, going to swim in. I almost didn't make it. Damn near drowned. 'Cause instead of going around the riptide, I was going against it. That's enough.

Anything else?

AG: All the questions...

JG: I don't have anything.

YC: No you edit and cut out what you don't what.

AG: Well, thank you very much for sharing...

YC: See what you end up with.

AG: Appreciate it very much.

(Conversation off-mike)

JG: I have one question back here.

?: It's about when you went back to the \_\_\_\_\_, did you have a chance to go and see the *Arizona* after the attack and how did it make you feel?

YC: Well, I've been back there any number of times and I still get tears in your eyes. You can't talk. I took, oh, some time ago, three guys that lived there all their lives to there, they want to go see the memorial and one friend from the Mainland. So I said, "Okay, let's go out there."

So I took 'em out there, went on the memorial, went to see the picture. And it got to me. So I tried to point out to them that—when I went out on the memorial, it teed me off to start with, after I got out there. Here come these guys that had their hats on and anything else. So I asked 'em, I said,

"Do you go to church and keep your hat on?" I said, "You are—now, this is a memorial to this 500 G.I.s that are in this ship, that they couldn't help it, that they are there because they were protecting your freedom." I said, "Freedom don't come cheap. They were fighting for that. Take your cotton-picking hat off."

I didn't tell 'em. I wanted to say it, but I says, "Whenever you're in a memorial such as this, when you come in, why don't you take your—uncover, is what I'm asking."

I had my hat in my hand, but I noticed that most of the volunteers out there don't take their hat off. But if somebody's going out there, they should, they tell 'em when they—you've seen this show. They tell 'em, the last thing they tell 'em, that when you go on the memorial, it's a memorial to these military. Take your hat off.

How about that? That answer your question?

?: Beautiful.

YC: Thank you. Now, every word that I'm telling you, told you, except that rumor, is a fact and you can verify most all of it if you go to the Pentagon, go to the history section and dig out the history of C55 coast artillery

[*C Battery 555<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery*]. They disbanded after the war was over. But I mentioned—I don't know whether I mentioned to you, but I mentioned to somebody that you probably got some lulus, half-stories, 'cause I've heard 'em. And I'll tell you one that I've heard the same guy told a number of times.

He said, "I had a brother at Hickam Field on December 7."

The guy was on the *West Virginia* got blowed off in the water. He says they were gathering up the people, dead bodies. And they got to him and they thought he was dead,

so they took him over to the, where they were, morgue. Tagged the toes, who they were. And the next morning, some of the guys come through there and his foot twitched. So the guy stopped and looked again, his foot twitched. Checked, the guy's alive. Laid there all night. Said it's his brother. If you hear it again, don't believe it.

Okay.

JG: Thanks, Yuell.

YC: Appreciate it.

JG: That's wonderful.

YC: Glad to have it, glad to help, but I don't—navy ships in port December 7. One fleet was from San Francisco and one fleet from Hawaii. Nobody ever says anything about that or don't even know it! All *pau*, okay.

AG: You see any of your pals from the 55<sup>th</sup>?

YC: Only ones I see is the local ones. Now, there's one, Julian, I guess he was up here the other—Julius.

AG: You still may see him. I think he was scheduled for this morning.

YC: Well, anyway, he's the only one left. One other guy that's civilian, he got out just before the army started. It's only two of us on the base now. George...

END OF INTERVIEW